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From Carnmore, Claregalway
Age: 77
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Brona

John

I've been in Carnmore all my life and I remember the black and tans

Brona

John

What do you remember about them?

I remember them coming into the house after the ambush in Kilroe, near Headford. A good few of my people in it. My uncle was there and my brother-in-law that was in town and various people then. This was a house they used to come to (The Republicans) for a cup of tea or a meal. It was always there. The ambush was a failure. It was well planned out but the Commenant, the man in charge lost his nerve. There were four Tan lorries coming along the road to Galway. They always travelled 50 yards apart and the Commenant was the far end above and the arrangement was there would be no shot fired until the last lorry was opposite him above. Everything was arranged. The hand grenades and shot guns were within by the wall and the rifles were in the higher ground outside. They had it well planned. Four days they were waiting for the tans. They knew they had to come. They came and whatever came on the Commement, he lost his nerve, didn't he fire the first lorry. So they raced it back and the tans put on their machine guns, but there was good cover on the road so they escaped back to the place where they'd meet afterwards. When they were there they missed one man, Charlie Quinn. He just left his hand on the wass and it was shot off him. My uncle, Pat Forde, from Lisheenavalla and his neighbour John Grealish said they wouldn't leave Charlie, they'd go back. They went back and they were a long time mooching along the woods. They were afraid. It was a strange country to them. They were just going to leave, they reckoned he was arrested or dead, when they heard a moan. They got him under a wall covered with briars. They wouldn't have only for the moan. They carried him back to the post and they made a stretcher with sticks and ropes and carried him across country to my brother-in-laws place in Gortatleva next door to Michael Walshe's. Michael Murphy's. Philips was the surname of my brother- in- law. He lives now in Murphys pub in High Street. He is 98. He was involved in the 1916, in Francock and all those prisons in England. They got Charlie to his house in Gortatleva.

Brona

John

Where was Charlie Quinn from?

Claregalway, next door to Billy Morris. They would carry him to the Infirmary in Prospect Hill, where the County Buildings are now, but he was a wanted man, so they couldn't bring him near it. So he was down in Gortatleva for three weeks above in the loft. They used to have to carry him from there to Carnmore Cross every night to meet a student doctor. He was a Republican. He came out from the infirmary with a nurse to treat him. She used to take stuff from within the hospital. Anyway the hand got septic in spite of this and he'd have to go to

hospital, but how was he to go and they watching him? So the great Surgeon O'Malley was a great republican and they approached him. Himself and Dr. Sands had a nursing home in Salthill, St. Brides, the Jesuits and there now. So they brought him there and Dr. O'Malley rushed in to the nursing home and he got Charlie, Blanket and all out into his own car. The only two cars in Galway at that time was Sands and O'Malleys. He brought him down to his own house where you turn to Salthill. They hadn't gone for five minutes when the Tans landed in it. Someone tipped them off. They said they knew he was there and the matron said there was a man there with a wounded hand but it wasn't a gunshot wound. It was a timber accident with a saw. This man's bandages were taken off and shown to the Tans so they were satisfied and they went. It would have been terrible if there wasn't someone that knew him well that was going out with and R.I.C. man squealed.

Brona

I heard that, a nurse or someone?

John

That's right. After Kilroe my uncle, Pat Forde and a great friend of one of the lads Seamus Ban Duggan from Montiagh. He was a boiler man in the region for a while. Well they were asleep on the settle bed in the kitchen in our old house when the Tans came. The dog was barking so luckily they got away. My mother was only three weeks dead and I was 6 years old and asleep with my old fella. The Tans pulled up at the gate and the old fella shouted from time to pull up his pants. I slept through all the noise but the light woke me. I never seen a flash light before that in my life. When the pair were leaving they had to go quickly and when they were pulling on their clothes they must have dropped a 45 gun from the holster and it was in the settle bed. Meanwhile my sister Nonnie had closed the bed without knowing that it was in it. They searched the house, but they never looked at the settle bed which looked harmless in the kitchen. They brought out my brother Eddie to shoot him. They said he was in Kilroe. They knew the house was involved.

Brona

Was he there?

John

No he would have been but his father wouldn't let him go because his mother was only after dying. But be God they pulled out Michael Walsh and Pat the neighbour. There was a Sargent Gaffney. His wife was a teacher in the school. He was retired. Being trained man he knew something was going on so he came out there where they used to build reeks of turf. The Tans were just 10 yards from our gate and they had Eddie on the ground with 5 or 6 in front of him. He was only 19 but a big man. When the Tans saw Gaffney, one of them said "who is this man?" and he didn't answer. They asked a second time and he still didn't answer. An officer asked the third time and he said "I'm ex-Sargent Gaffney of the R.I.C." So the two of them and a chat. So the officer turned around and they let Eddie go.

Brona *So did Gaffney explain that Eddie was not involved?*

John No one will ever know what he said, but he got him off anyway. Only for him he would have been shot. When they went the auxiliaries came and they were very drunk and Gaffney send them away as well. None of them came into the house.

Brona *How did Eddie take his ordeal?*

John When he got up from the ground he looked and saw the informer there. He was from the village. He was in the Tans. That time you would join for the money. In the morning someone had opened the settle and what did they see but the gun, the 45. If the Tans had seen that he would have been finished.

Brona *Why didn't they look there?*

John They didn't bother about it because it was so simple there by the wall.

Brona *Can you tell me about farming in the area?*

John Well there were some big farmers and some small farmers. The small farmers are mostly this size now, 30,40, 50 acres. There was a good enough standard of living because they had the benefit of the great Galway market. I was going there since I was 12 or so.

Brona *Did you walk in?*

John I used to walk with my load of turf or hay or spuds or whatever you'd have and my father would have another load probable. I knew Galway well. The few bob was great and then when you were older you went dancing and it was grand to have a few bob. Others might find it tough because times were bad. There was not that much in the parish.

Brona *What's the story about Carnmore and Claregalway and the hurling and the fights outside Hanley's?*

John Ah no, there was no fights really. Someone is exaggerating because I used to go the Hanley's and there might be an odd scrap if someone was trying to get in and they hadn't enough money. It wasn't bad. The friends were never within it, they were at Loggerheads over splitting the team.

Brona *Why did they split?*

John We started our team here away back around 1932. I was one of them. We went to the Westport final and who did we meet in the semi-final but Claregalway and there was plenty of stick going all right but it passed out quietly. We beat them. They wanted us to join up with them the following year so I said "how many of the lads do you want?" and they said them all. So at first there were 7 or 8 of them but there they started laying them off by degrees so there they were in the Westport final again in Galway and they asked me to step down. Kildeneen bet on an objection or something. So they wanted a club here and I formed one here. I was the first Chairman. There was only this little village first and they were laughing at us. In Claregalway it was called "Clarkes Mushroom Team", like a mushroom it came quick. I said it is a mushroom that is growing fast. That was in 1944 and the lads I had here weren't able to hit the ball because they never played before. They didn't even know how to take a puck but they were interested and they started practising and they became good. They made the Westport final. They were very raw they knew very little. They weren't cute or

anything. I brought the first County Championship cup to this parish that ever came. Claregalway had a few words with me but I didn't worry. They have a great hurling team here now and they have great potential.

Brona *Is the Claregalway team gone now?*

John That's gone. A few of them came up here. They didn't like the change of names from Claregalway to Carnmore. I wouldn't give in to them. They were so mean to us. They took over the whole team and dumped them.

Brona *After the War of Independence did they all stay Republicans? Was there a split?*

John No. There were some Free Staters in this parish but it was never bitter like in other areas of the country. They used to argue it out in The 9 Arches pub. The porter used to be flowing from the half-gallons, but they'd make the bargain before the argument started, no blows and they stuck to it, but every night they argued who was right and who was wrong.

Brona *Can you tell me something about this village?*

John This is known as Parc Garbh. Canon Moran wanted to put 10-12 in every area for the stations and he called this place Parc Garch and up the road is Gortalesa and back the road is Bothar Carnmore and then towards Claregalway is Gortnogoolini. There is one house left in it now.
This lad came into Grealish's pub one night and he said "I've just served mass in Gortnegoolini and no one but me knew where it was" he wouldn't tell them where so a great argument started. Anyway I told Michael Collins where it was eventually. I said it is below Grateheads gate as you turn down Cregboy, there is a triangle field adjoining Morris' land. There were three houses there, Corcoran's, Boyle, and I think Murphy's are in it yet. Gcoullineen is a land in a triangle with three corners that's very hard to plough anyway.

Brona *Did Canon Moran name these areas himself from scratch?*

John As far as I know, he named them himself.

Brona *The names were not on them before he came so?*

John I never heard that there was, of course it was all the English language that time. There's no hope that you'd speak a word of Irish. This man, he's still alive and going to school one day he was talking to his pal. He told me he was talking across the wall to his neighbour in Irish, out there in Montiagh and the master Carter came behind him and he walloped him hard for speaking in Irish he was trying to get the English language and to kill the Irish language. They still speak Irish in Claregalway.

Brona *Is it strong in Carnmore as well?*

John It was before me. There are only two now that I can have a conversation with, Michael Hynes and Mick Lardiner. It's dying. It's going to die. Sure the Connemara fellas told me they used to come and pick spuds on or whatever. We would see them in the Galway market selling produce. It's a great market town. Carnmore has a great name of being a very wealthy place but it wasn't at all, but they had a great standard of living. They had the produce for the Galway market in Merchants Road. You'd go back at 4.00 in the morning to get the people from Aran who were depending on the tides for the boats and this place was nice and

near, only 6 Irish miles. The turnips and oats was opposite the Bank of Ireland. The potatoes market was in Woodquay. At that time there was a couple of bonamhs in every house, especially around Bothar Mei and cows too.

Brona

In the City?

John

Yes, Paddy Fahy from Woodquay had about 20 cows in the city and many loads of turnips. You'd bring them in to feed them. When we were going into town we'd meet Paddy Fahy going out and he had the trap and two 10-12 gallons cans of milk of milk in it, and the pony was so trained and the cow was so trained and he had a dog to drive the cow and Paddy behind the trap and they'd be two pints going to the house and two pints going to the next and so on. Delivering the milk he was until he got to his land.

Brona

Do you remember the pig market in Galway?

John

Why wouldn't I. It was very handy. McGiverin I think was coming there as far as I remember, now it was quite a few years ago. The scale was there and all and it was very handy for the people living 4-5 miles away. They got their few quid and had their few pints and off home again. There was another one in Kelly's of Loughgeorge. Corbett was the man from Headford. That was on a Monday too, that was the most popular one. His son has a public house down in Clonboo. Corbett was a decent man and he got most of the pigs.

Brona

Was it the same Monday and two different marts on?

John

Yes, very often it was the same Monday, but you would have your favourite. McGivern came to Cashlea too. That's how the people lived between the Galway markets. There was very little livestock at the time, two cows to every house.

Brona

Was that because water was so scarce?

John

It's lovely water here now. It was I that brought it in it. Down in the old school was the old fashioned toilet and they couldn't get a drink of water and Mick Donnelan the well-known Galway T.D. became a great friend of mine and we brought the first pump up to where it is now. It's a great pump. It's modernised now. There is a spring there and you worked it with your hand. A few years ago it was made into a modern pump. Every house in the village has some and for miles into the land. It serves I suppose about 60 houses and 100 acres of land. It's doing the lot. It's beautiful water. The water the other side of Carnmore is terrible. It comes out of the Corrib. You couldn't drink it. It's alright for cattle. They had a pump just behind Grealish Village, but they took it away. It was at the side of the road on the grass bank and the people came for water on their barrels and their house, but they let it be closed and they took the stuff from the Corrib. It's a wonder they don't sink a pump there for themselves for the houses. That is in West Carnmore where all the big farmers are.

Brona

Do you know anything about Cloch Mhaol Castle?

John

I started taking interest in it when the land was divided in 1958 or 1959. I noticed a high spot on the road when they were building a wall which they did not touch so I asked about it and it was part of the graveyard. It has been there since the castle was in it. It's the dead of the castle. Of course I've only history handed down, but I heard it was the Danes that built it.

Brona

I doubt it.

John

The Danes did have castles. They had the ramparts. They are still there. Them Normans knew how to build. They had no cement and some of their castles are still there. Lime and sand is what they had. Daub, Cloch Mhaol would be worth seeing. It withstood "Debbie" and all that came before her and after her. There is a big piece of building about 8 feet off the ground or more and there is nothing keeping it up but the mortar and the daub and it never fell.

Brona

You never learned who lived in it?

John

No, all I heard was it was built by the Danes and that was their dead that was buried in the burial ground. You would hardly notice it now. When you turn over to the left at Cloch Maol house and you turn right up against the hill at the castle and you go around the other corner and up again. You just notice as you turn the first corner a high crochain of bushes and rough stone and under that is the graveyard. I often wondered why they make a castle up in such an isolated place. There was no road going into it that time and I don't know how they came out or how they went in. It must be the same old boreen even though that doesn't go as far as the castle at all.

Brona

Do you know anything about Lisarulla Castle?

John

No, there is nothing. I'll tell you one man's land was going through the castle. He was a landlord. He was a big man, 6'6".

In Murphy country there is an old slate house on the right and a fellow called Patheen Murphy lived there. He was only 5'8". His daughter was married into Naughtons pub in Cross Street. The Tans came to the pub one night and asked them to take down the Irish sign or they'd shoot them. They had them down on their knees and the Naughtons said "shoot away". The Tans couldn't make them take it down, well their father was Patcheen. Now this landlord that I'm talking about was an agent and he drove a few people in Ballymurphy out of their land. But the man Patcheen he didn't take it off him. Patcheen was working on the railway or somewhere to make a few bob and he came this evening and he saw this man's sheep on his land and a wall built up and the bold Patcheen went and tumbled down the wall and put back the sheep where they came from and built the wall again as it was. When he came the following evening the landlord had it knocked again and the sheep over and Patcheen drove them back and built the wall. On the third evening the two met. This 6'6" giant and Patcheen had a row. They got into hand grips and Patcheen got the big giant under him and he wouldn't let the landlord off the ground until he promised him he'd never again touch his land and he never did. But there was a big yarn out of that. At a certain time of the year the people used to forge with the sock and cultair of a plough to Hurley's forge in Cregmore, at the bridge. They'd have a couple of pounds of iron and steel and their sock and cultair of a plough down in the bag and a piece of steel on their back and down across to Hurleys. There was a good many this wet day and Hurley was beating away and the few shillings coming. He was in a great humour. Who came in but Patcheen and his own piece of steel, anyway there was a great welcome for him and the crack started. So Patcheen started explaining to the Blacksmith what happened between himself and the landlord and saying every work he spoke was true. Hurley was the man that was questioning him the most so he made a dive for Hurley the second time and Hurley mad for the hammer and said "Cuinn amach anois a diabhaill. Chuirfide me ann custair ag easamh in" – "keep out you devil or I'll put the hammer standing on your head".

- Brona** *Is his family gone out of there now?*
John His daughter was Naughton. He had another daughter married to the first chairman of the Gaelic League.....Barrett.....
- Brona** *When did the incident with the landlord happen?*
John That would be away back now, well I'd say you could almost say it was 100 years ago.
- Brona** *So you heard it from word of mouth?*
John Yes.
- Brona** *Was he anything to the shop crowd Pat and John?*
John That's the house. He was their father. There was something very Irish, now there was something very queer about the same two brothers.
- Brona** *So Patcheen was Kieran Barretts grandfather?*
John Yes, his father was the chairman of the Gaelic League wasn't he? I think Kieran was going for the priesthood or some religious order. He dressed in that fashion until he died. He was down here in his uncles in the summer time and he seemed to be the coldest man that ever lived. The hottest day that ever came he'd have a black overcoat on and if it made the slightest drop of rain he'd run, there are hundreds of books written and he used to get most of it from Mike Silke living down here. They're gone out of it now and I know there isn't one chapter of truth in the whole lot of it.
- Brona** *Mike Silke was making it all up?*
John He was. He had nothing else to do. He was comfortable, himself and the sister and the other brother was out in the land so he'd be thinking all day what he'd tell Kieran Barrett.
- Brona** *What kind of stories did he tell?*
John Everything you could think of. But it's like the history of Ireland every bit of it is wrong. There was no worse bitter enemies than the Irish people towards one another.
- Brona** *Do you remember much about Murphy's shop?*
John There were shops here and there. Gaffney had a shop.
- Brona** *The R.I.C. man?*
John Yes, he had tea and sugar and there might have been a bit of bacon and soda, just what the woman wanted. There was no such thing as buying everything. Small things you wanted in the house, thread, 101 small things. They'd get their supplies in Galway.
- Brona** *What about pig meal?*
John When you bring a load to town you don't want to be coming home with an empty cart and that's how the pig meal was bought.

Brona ***When did Murphy's shop open?***

John I'd say around 1930. John was on the land and Pat had the shop. He used to buy eggs from the women and they'd get their groceries from that. There was a lorry coming to him then to collect the eggs from the women. Money was scarce then. It was hard enough to survive.

Brona ***Did you hear any stories about the famine?***

John My grandmother survived the famine. She spoke of it but I was only 9 when she died. She was 97, I believe. She told me all about it but I have it forgotten. She mentioned the soup-kitchens, back where Leonards are now in Lydican. That house is only knocked a year or two.

Brona ***Who ran it?***

John Let me see..... McCormack. They bought a place in Headford and sold this place to Leonard. I think one of them was my great-grandmother. I don't think they took land off anyone. That was a long time ago. My grandmother was originally from Caherlea and they changed to Cloch Maol. His brother owned Cloch Maol and he had a good few sons and he divided it in two. They called the area around Cloch Maol the mountain because of the heather that was there. They made land and farms out of it. There was three or four in a house at that time because there was no work.

